

"Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20).

All over the world, there are blood-soaked wars. They seem endless, and they embroil families, tribes and peoples. Gloria (aged 20) told us this story: "We received news of a village that had been burnt down. Lots of people lost everything. With my friends I collected some useful things: mattresses, clothes, food. We set out and after an eight hour journey we met all those people in such terrible need. We listened to them, dried their tears, hugged them and tried to comfort them. One family told us, 'Our little girl was in the house they burnt down. It felt like we were dying with her. Now, through your love, we have the strength to forgive the men who did this!'"

The Apostle Paul also experienced this kind of forgiveness, and it completely changed his life. He, the very one who was persecuting Christians, met God's free-given love. It came in a completely unexpected way as he was travelling. God then sent him out in his name as an ambassador of reconciliation.

This is how Paul became a passionate and credible witness to the mystery of Jesus who died and rose again. He spoke of Jesus who had reconciled the world to himself so that everyone could know and experience a life of communion with him and one another. Through Paul the Gospel message reached and fascinated even pagans, those thought to be furthest from salvation: "Be reconciled to God!" he said.

Despite our failings that discourage us, or the false certainties that fool us into thinking we have no need, we too can meet God's mercy. His love is so excessive! We can let it heal our hearts and, in the end, set us free to share this treasure with others. Like this we will give our contribution to God's plan of peace for all humanity and the whole of creation. This plan overcomes the contradictions of history, as Chiara Lubich suggests in this passage:

*"On the cross, in the death of his Son, God gave us the highest proof of his love. Through Christ's cross, he reconciled us to himself. This fundamental truth of our faith is fully relevant today.*

*It is the revelation all humankind awaits. Yes, God is close to all people with his love and he loves each person passionately. Our world needs to hear this proclamation, but we can proclaim God's love if first we proclaim it, again and again, to ourselves*

— until we feel surrounded by this love, even when everything would make us think the opposite... All our behaviour should make this truth credible.

*Jesus said clearly that before bringing our offering to the altar we should be reconciled with a brother or sister if they have anything against us (see Mt 5:23-24) ... So let's love one another as he loved us, without being closed or prejudiced, but being open to welcome and appreciate the positive in our neighbour, ready to give our lives for one another. This is Jesus' main command, the mark of Christians, valid today just as it was at the time of Christ's first followers. Living this word means becoming reconcilers."*

Living like this we will enrich our days with acts of friendship and reconciliation: in our own family and among families, in our own Church and among Churches, in every civil and religious community to which we belong.

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